United Nations E/AC.51/1998/L.7/Add.2

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: Limited
24 June 1998

Original: English

Committee for Programme and Coordination
Thirty-eighth session
1-26 June 1998 (part I)

Draft report

Rapporteur: Mr. Thomas **Schlesinger** (Austria)

Addendum

Programme questions

Proposed revisions to the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001

1. At its 12th meeting, on 11 June 1998, the Committee considered the report of the Secretary-General on priority-setting within the medium-term plan (A/53/134).

2. The Controller introduced the report of the Secretary-General and responded to queries raised during the Committee's consideration of the report.

Discussion

3. Views were expressed on the importance of priority-setting. It was noted, however, that difficulties had been encountered over the years, in particular in terms of the breadth and scope of priorities, which, at times, have been all-encompassing. Nevertheless, it was considered important to ensure that priorities continued to be established as means of focusing on issues that Member States considered as requiring specific attention within the medium-term plan period. At the same time, it was noted that there were also difficulties with establishing priorities at the subprogramme level because of the new structure of the medium-term plan, whereby many subprogrammes now replaced previous programmes. Views were expressed that priorities should be established also for the short term, in the context of the budget outline, to guide the allocation of resources in the programme budget.

4. Views were expressed that priorities should be established only in the medium-term plan, which is a translation of mandates into programmes and serves as the principal policy directive of the Organization. Views were also expressed that resources should be commensurate with the mandates for their full implementation.

98-17943 (E) 240698

5. Views were expressed in support of the recommendation that priorities be established in the context of the Secretary-General's proposed budget outline, rather than the medium-term plan. It was considered that the budget outline was the logical place to include priorities because it provided direct guidance to the Secretary-General on resource allocation in his proposed programme budget. It was also considered that the two-year cycle of the budget outline made it easier to take into account the latest legislative developments, which may affect priorities.

6. Views were expressed that it was important to avoid having more than one set of priorities, which might be inconsistent and could send mixed signals to the Secretary-General.

7. Further views were expressed that priorities were dynamic and could only be changed by the legislative bodies, but, once established, they must be observed in the implementation of mandated programmes and activities.

Conclusions and recommendations

[8. The Committee decided to recommend that priorities continue to be established in the medium-term plan, which is the principal policy directive of the United Nations. The priorities, as determined by the General Assembly in the medium-term plan, shall guide the allocation of resources in the subsequent programme budgets through the mechanisms provided for in General Assembly resolution 41/213 of 19 December 1986. The priorities contained in the budget outline should be in conformity with the priorities in the medium-term plan.

9. The Committee emphasized that priorities, once established by the General Assembly, cannot be changed or altered unless the Assembly decides otherwise.]

United Nations E/AC.51/1998/L.7/Add.3

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: Limited
24 June 1998

Original: English

Committee for Programme and Coordination
Thirty-eighth session
1-26 June 1998 (part I)
Agenda item 4

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: Mr. Thomas **Schlesinger** (Austria)

Programme questions

Proposed revisions to the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001

Programme 1. Political affairs

1. At its 12th and 13th meetings, on 11 June 1998, the Committee considered revisions to the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001. It had before it proposals in respect of programme 1, Political affairs.

2. The Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs introduced programme 1 and responded to queries raised during the Committee's consideration of the programme.

Discussion

3. Queries were raised on the proposed revision of subprogramme 1.1, Prevention, control and resolution of conflicts, related to the role and designation of the Department of Political Affairs as the United Nations focal point for post-conflict peace-building. It was pointed out that the mandate of the subprogramme was also reflected in General Assembly resolutions 52/13 of 20 November 1997, entitled "Culture of peace" and 52/15 of the same date, entitled "Proclamation of the year 2000 as the International Year for the Culture of Peace", and that those resolutions should be reflected at the end of the proposed paragraph 1.6 by adding the following phrase:

> "In this capacity, the Department of Political Affairs will promote a culture of peace and play an active role in the process of preparing a declaration and a programme of

98-17993 (E) 240698

action on a culture of peace, including a programme of activities that will mark the year 2000: the International Year for the Culture of peace".

The view was further expressed that in the legislative mandate of subprogramme 1.1, Assembly resolutions 52/13 and 52/15 should be added.

4. Queries were raised on paragraph 1.19 on the role of subprogramme 1.4, Security Council affairs, related to research and the preparation of analytical studies on the application and interpretation of the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations related to the activities of the Council and its provisional rules of procedures. It was pointed out that while that activity was the prerogative of the Office of Legal Affairs, the programme narrative of both programme 1 and programme 27 included it as part of their objective. Similarly, in paragraph 1.24, under subprogramme 1.6 (new subprogramme 1.5), Decolonization, it was pointed out that references to the same activities were also included. Information was sought from the Secretariat, therefore, on the apparent duplication of functions.

5. Concern was expressed on the proposed deletion of General Assembly resolution 50/84 of 15 December 1995, entitled "Question of Palestine", as a legislative mandate for the programme. The view was expressed that while resolutions 52/49 of 9 December 1997, entitled "Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People", and 52/50 of the same date, entitled "Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat", provided the latest mandates for the subprogramme, they did not completely supersede the provisions of resolution 50/84, in which the activities called for were of a greater scope.

Conclusions and recommendations

6. The Committee recommended approval of the proposed revisions to programme 1, Political affairs, of the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001, subject to the following modifications:

(a) Restore General Assembly resolution 50/84 as a legislative mandate of subprogramme 1.7 (new subprogramme 1.6), Question of Palestine;

(b) Take note of the assurances by the Secretariat that consultations will be held with the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, referred to in paragraph 5 of the proposed revisions to programme 1 of the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001, on subprogramme 1.6, Decolonization;

(c) In the legislative mandate under subprogramme 1.4, Security Council affairs, add General Assembly resolutions 51/209 of 17 December 1996, entitled "Report of the Special Committee on the Charter of the United Nations and on the Strengthening of the Role of the Organization", and 52/161 of 15 December 1997, entitled "Report of the Special Committee on the Charter of the United Nations and on the Strengthening of the Role of the Organization";

(d) In the legislative mandate under subprogramme 1.6 (new subprogramme 1.5), Decolonization, add General Assembly resolutions 51/209 and 52/161.